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SOVIET PRESS COVERAGE OF GREAT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS  
DURING THREE PERIODS IN 1952 AND 1953

As one way of possibly establishing the present intentions of the Govern-  
ment of the USSR with regard to the great construction projects, the space  
devoted to articles concerning them in four Soviet newspapers over three spe-  
cific periods has been calculated and tabulated (see appended table) and the  
content of the articles analyzed for possible changes. The newspapers were  
Pravda, Leninskoye Znamya, Pravda Ukrainy, and Turkmenkaya Iskra. They were  
examined for the second quarter 1952, the second quarter 1953, and for the  
period from 24 September to 24 October 1952.

These four newspapers were selected for the following reasons: Pravda is  
the authoritative journal of the Communist Party, Pravda Ukrainy reports on the  
local aspects of the construction of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Center, as well  
as of the South Ukrainian and North Crimean Canals, Turkmenkaya Iskra reports  
on the construction of the Main Turkmen Canal as a local project, Leninskoye  
Znamya was chosen because it is published in Petrozavodsk, an area not immedi-  
ately affected by the great construction projects. In addition, Leninskoye  
Znamya has been noted to report intelligence items on scattered areas in the  
USSR which are not of immediate concern of Petrozavodsk and its environs.

Since the press for the third quarter 1953 is not yet fully available in  
FDD, the second quarter 1953 and the comparable period of 1952 were chosen  
for the survey. The period from 24 September to 24 October 1952 was chosen  
because the 19th Party Congress met during that time and its tasks were dis-  
cussed for 2 weeks before and after the actual meeting of the congress.

An analysis of the contents of the articles published in all four news-  
papers during the three periods does not reveal any reversion or change in  
the decision to build the construction projects. The only possible exception  
is the Main Turkmen Canal, which is discussed below in connection with an anal-  
ysis of the space allotted.

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With seasonal variations, the articles discuss in the same tone during the three periods planned and accomplished work, names of outstanding workers, results of socialist competition prior to national holidays and anniversaries, some shortcomings, equipment received at construction sites from certain plants, reduction of costs, and the benefits the projects will bring when they are completed.

As the appended table shows, however, the amount of space allotted to the projects, except Kuybyshev, was sharply reduced in the second quarter 1953, as compared to the second quarter 1952. The reason Kuybyshev continues to receive coverage is probably that it is closest to completion. It is to be finished in 1955.

The following reasons or combination of reasons are suggested to explain the reduction of space devoted to the projects as a whole.

1. In 1952, most of the work was of a preliminary nature, such as expeditions, surveys, exploratory work, etc., which the Soviet press usually reports together with the historical background in great detail and with many repetitions for propaganda purposes. In 1953, the press reports narrowed down to actual construction work, of which there was not much to report.

2. Since Stalin's death the press has devoted far more space to topics of more immediate concern to the people, such as production of consumers' goods, the opening of stores, etc., and to international news than to the construction of a communist society in the distant future. Since Soviet newspapers are usually limited to 4 pages it may have been decided to sacrifice press coverage of the great construction projects, except Kuybyshev, which is closest to completion.

3. The reduction in space may actually reflect an abandonment of the great construction projects temporarily or permanently due to shortages of materials and labor. Except in the case of the Main Turkmen Canal, this seems unlikely and the first two reasons appear to be more likely explanations. It may be added here that the order of priority for building the projects is as follows: (1) the Kuybyshev and Kakhovka Hydroelectric Centers, (2) the Stalingrad Hydroelectric Center and the South Ukrainian and North Crimean Canals, and (3) the Main Turkmen Canal.

The complete lack of coverage given to the Main Turkmen Canal in 1953 plus an article published in Pravda on 19 June 1952 would suggest rather strongly that the work on the Main Turkmen Canal has slowed down or even been abandoned at least temporarily. The Pravda article, which was written by S. Kalizhnyuk, chief of the Main Turkmen Canal construction, elaborates on the great difficulties faced by the builders of the canal.

Kalizhnyuk pointed out that tens of millions of cubic meters of lumber, over one million tons of steel, and over 2 million tons of cement will be required to complete the project, which includes the creation of one of the largest cotton growing areas in the USSR and of industrial centers in the lower Amu-Dar'ya area and in Western Turkmenia. He stated that transportation of these materials will require a tremendous number of railroad cars, and that the manufacture and transportation of the materials will require a great outlay of funds.

Kalizhnyuk declared that not less than 1.5 million cubic meters of concrete must be placed each year in 1953 and 1954. He revealed that the total output of all the cement plants in Central Asia cannot meet this demand, and that, consequently, new cement plants are to be built in the region of the planned canal. He stated, however, that this had not yet been done.

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Furthermore, Kalizhnyuk pointed out many other difficulties and problems which must be solved quickly if the work is to be carried out. He mentioned an acute shortage of any kind of fuel (which among other things curtails the local manufacture of bricks), the absence of suitable raw materials for construction in the locality of the canal, and the necessity for working out substitutes, for which scientific help was still being awaited.

The Main Turkmen Canal construction may have encountered additional difficulties. There is a possibility that the amnesty given by the Malenkov government robbed the Main Turkmen Canal construction of its slave labor. Furthermore, the inferior living and working conditions at the construction sites, where in some cases drinking water is brought in by plane, do not offer much attraction for workers. Conceivably, workers might have left the construction after Stalin's death if a relaxation of regulations occurred.

The prohibitive cost of the construction and other difficulties pointed out by Kalizhnyuk, together with the possible labor troubles described above, might have compelled the Soviet government to slow down the work or to stop it completely, at least temporarily.

Newspaper Space Allotted to Construction Projects  
(in inches)

|  | Second Quarter<br>1952 | Second Quarter<br>1953 | Party Conference<br>Period,<br>24 Sep - 24 Oct 1952 | Total |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|---|-------|
| <u>Kakhovka Hydroelectric Center</u>   |                        |                        |   |       |
| Turkmenskaya Iskra                     | 4                      | 3                      | 0   | 7     |
| Leninskoye Znamya                      | 39                     | 13                     | 3   | 55    |
| Pravda Ukrainy                         | 285                    | 84                     | 14  | 383   |
| Pravda                                 | 42                     | 80                     | 5   | 127   |
| Total                                  | 370                    | 180                    | 22  | 572   |
| <u>Kuybyshev Hydroelectric Center</u>  |                        |                        |   |       |
| Turkmenskaya Iskra                     | 54                     | 32                     | 0   | 86    |
| Leninskoye Znamya                      | 33                     | 105                    | 29  | 167   |
| Pravda Ukrainy                         | 28                     | 12                     | 4   | 44    |
| Pravda                                 | 57                     | 73                     | 15  | 145   |
| Total                                  | 172                    | 222                    | 48  | 442   |
| <u>Stalingrad Hydroelectric Center</u> |                        |                        |   |       |
| Turkmenskaya Iskra                     | 126                    | 0                      | 0   | 126   |
| Leninskoye Znamya                      | 22                     | 21                     | 4   | 47    |

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|                | Second Quarter<br>1952 | Second Quarter<br>1953 | Party Conference<br>Period,<br>24 Sep - 24 Oct 1952 | Total |
|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|---|-------|
| Pravda Ukrainy | 10                     | 3                      | 0   | 13    |
| Pravda         | 54                     | 46                     | 7   | 107   |
| Total          | 212                    | 70                     | 11  | 293   |

Main Turkmen Canal

|                    |       |   |     |       |
|--------------------|-------|---|-----|-------|
| Turkmenskaya Iskra | 821   | 0 | 131 | 952   |
| Leninskoye Znamya  | 149   | 0 | 15  | 164   |
| Pravda Ukrainy     | 30    | 0 | 0   | 30    |
| Pravda             | 85    | 0 | 39  | 124   |
| Total              | 1,085 | 0 | 185 | 1,270 |

South Ukrainian and North  
Crimean Canals

|                    |       |     |     |       |
|--------------------|-------|-----|-----|-------|
| Turkmenskaya Iskra | 121   | 0   | 0   | 121   |
| Leninskoye Znamya  | 7     | 0   | 0   | 7     |
| Pravda Ukrainy     | 225   | 45  | 0   | 270   |
| Pravda             | 45    | 0   | 0   | 45    |
| Total              | 398   | 45  | 0   | 443   |
| Grand Total        | 2,237 | 517 | 266 | 3,020 |

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